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ABSTRACT

Historically, educators in the United States have responded to differences among individuals and groups by separating students and altering the content of the curriculum to which they are exposed. Since the 1920s, most high schools have offered a tracked curriculum, and tracking starts as early as elementary school. Research and public commentary have shown that tracking is neither functional nor democratic. Although it has been justified as sorting students on the basis of achievement, it has carried a racial, ethnic, and social bias from its inception. Recognizing the inequalities in tracking, educators have begun exploring alternatives. The Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) program of the San Diego (California) public schools is an example of an approach to untracking previously low-achieving students into the same college preparatory program as high-achieving students. AVID employs many principles of cooperative learning in its "writing, inquiry, and collaboration" approach to curriculum and instruction. How well AVID has worked and why it works are examined through, among other factors, examination of the college enrollment of AVID students. Results of the AVID evaluation suggest that educators should consider the importance of providing substantial social scaffolding to students when elevating their curricula and that they use students' knowledge and expertise for classroom instruction until there is a major revamping of our cultural, political, and economic systems. (Contains 7 tables, 13 figures, and 205 references.) (SLD)



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